

THREE goals inside three minutes — two by Tony Amos — set Saturday's friendly against Loughborough College alight and prompted some flowing second half football from Wycombe Wanderers (writes Stuart Earp).

The action all started in the 51st minute when Steven Palfrey latched onto Rob Williams' poor back pass and clipped the ball over new goalkeeper Mick Hughes. Twenty-five seconds later the ball was in the other net!

Amos collected the ball at a wide angle and sent a left foot drive into the far corner. One minute after that, Amos was at it again, this time shooting powerfully with his left foot from a free kick. The ball struck John Birchall and was deflected into the net.

Wanderers' third goal came on the hour and was as spectacular as the other two. The England striker took a corner on the top wing and the ball curled into the net at the near posts, eluding goalkeeper Graham Cracknell.

A 3-1 scoreline looked most unlikely after a dull first half, highlighted by one or two superb moves by the Blues. But for the most part, rugged defensive work by Loughborough held Wycombe in check.

Rob Williams returned to the side for his first game in four weeks and his uncompromising tackling left no doubt that he had recovered from the 14 stitches inserted in his leg after the Leatherhead game. Aylesbury United second string goalkeeper Mick Hughes came in for his first match and, after a nervous start, looked competent. Many will remember his performance for the 'Ducks' against Wycombe last month and have already seen his potential.

Amos treble wrecks students

Wycombe W. 3, Loughborough C. 1

Hughes' early tension was demonstrated when he dropped Mark Tidy's cross after 11 minutes, the ball striking Gerry Olson before being cleared. A sweeping 18th minute move almost put Wanderers ahead when Pritchard put Searle away. A neat turn saw Tony Horseman take over but his weak shot was comfortably saved by former Amersham Town goalkeeper Graham Cracknell.

But it was an isolated attack and for the most part, Wycombe were struggling to find their rhythm. Towards the later stages of the half, Wanderers sparked again when Alan Gane struck a far post cross to Searle. The centre-forward nodded the ball back to Horseman but Bodger blazed high over the top on the volley.

At half time Wycombe brought on John Delaney for Olson, Amos for Searle and Cooper for Jameson, with Dave Bullock moving into midfield.

The changes certainly made a difference. Delaney's superior distribution and calmness did much to steady the defence, Bullock seemed no stranger to midfield and Amos provided the goals.

Delaney cleared off the line in the 48th minute after a mistake by Hughes and then the goal rush started. At 2-1, Wanderers began to turn on their best football, showing more cohesion as Loughborough fell away. Amos' third

goal added to their misery and by the close the students were looking a ragged outfit.

Palfrey came off for John Thorpe after 79 minutes but the substitute was unable to make his mark. Wanderers had an abundance of possession throughout the half and moved smoothly towards victory.

There were several pleasing aspects of the game for Wycombe to savour. The performance of Alan Gane in midfield added some useful bite and sharpness while Derek Gamblin seemed far more enthusiastic and Amos provided the necessary power up front.

But with several players of equal skill in the Wycombe squad this season, they are unlikely to find a settled combination — something that has been one of their main problems so far.

WYCOMBE: M. Hughes, D. Gamblin, D. Bullock, R. Williams, G. Olson (sub. J. Delaney half time), K. Jameson (sub. M. Cooper half time), A. Gane, L. Pritchard, M. Hollifield, K. Searle (sub. A. Amos half time), A. Horseman.

LOUGHBOROUGH: G. Cracknell, J. Birch, L. Kent, T. Pursell, R. Dams, J. Birchall, D. Cottrill, B. Barracough, S. Palfrey (sub. J. Thorpe 79 mins), T. Whitmore, M. Tidy.

Referee: D. Pond (Chelmsford).

Half-time: 0-0. Goalscorers: Wycombe—Amos 3 (51, 52, 60), Loughborough—Palfrey (51).

Attendance: 481.